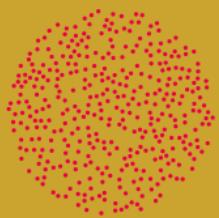


POST MODERNITY POST WAR  
GENDER BEYOND BINARIES POWER  
TRANSDISCIPLINARY GOVERN  
COMMON GOOD TRANSGENDER  
SEX GENDERS POSTMODERN  
RESPONSIBILITY SEXUALITY  
IDENTITY GENDER, SEXUALITY,  
AND MEDICINE  
IN POSTWAR EUROPE  
1945-1990  
LOVERS  
TRANSGRESSIONS CHOICES  
GOVERNMENT REPRODUCTION  
RIGHTS SEXOLOGY EUGENICS  
HEALTH SHAME  
NORMAL CONTROL  
SHARED IDEALS POLITICS  
TOGETHER BORDERS DIVIDES

WARBURG HAUS  
HAMBURG

9 JUNE - 10 JUNE 2023

A 'TAMING THE EUROPEAN  
LEVIATHAN' CONFERENCE



# LEVIATHAN PROJECT







## **Key Contacts**

**Dr Kate Docking**  
E: [kate.docking@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:kate.docking@uni-hamburg.de)  
M: +49 (0)1575 3196 712

**Dr David Peace**  
E: [david.peace@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:david.peace@uni-hamburg.de)  
M: +49 (0)176 2095 2359

# **WELCOME TO HAMBURG**

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the University of Hamburg for the conference **Beyond Binaries: Gender, Sexuality, and Medicine Across Post-War Europe, 1945-1991**. We hope that in this booklet you will find all the necessary information for the conference and your stay in Hamburg. Please do not hesitate to contact the conference organisers using the details provided above if you have any questions during your time in Hamburg.

The conference will take place at **Warburg-Haus**, an institution of the University of Hamburg and the Aby Warburg Foundation. The conference's panel sessions will take place in Warburg-Haus Library. Networking, lunch, and refreshment breaks will take place in the Warburg Haus Ground Floor Foyer.

We hope you enjoy your time with us and that the panels and discussions will prove to be productive and enjoyable!

## **TAMING THE EUROPEAN LEVIATHAN**

This conference is organized by the Centre for the Study of Health, Ethics, and Society (CHES), University of Hamburg, and is part of the ERC-funded project 'Taming the European Leviathan' (LEVIATHAN). The project broadly asks what is Europe? When studying post-war Europe, the focus is largely on ideological divisions, competing economic models and on the different political systems that separated Western and Eastern Europe. The LEVIATHAN project challenges existing east-west interpretations of European identity. Rather than studying postwar Europe's two halves separately, we aim to understand Europe as one. European history, we argue, is characterised by a preoccupation with health as a common good. By taking medicine as an analytical lens, we are developing a common history of Europe beyond the usual east-west dichotomy. LEVIATHAN takes a multidisciplinary approach: neither economics nor politics nor ideology nor everyday life, but an integration of these perspectives makes it possible to understand the pursuit of the European common good.

# BEYOND BINARIES

## **GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND MEDICINE IN POSTWAR EUROPE**

**1945-1990**

How can gender and sexuality – broadly conceived both methodologically and thematically – help to inform historical understanding of the role of medicine in post-war Europe? In what ways can thinking ‘beyond binaries’ in its many forms allow for new perspectives on the role of medicine in post-war European lives?

This conference brings together scholars working across disciplines to examine how theoretical approaches incorporating gender and sexuality can shed light on medical ethics, scientific practices, and policymaking associated with health across ideological divides. It examines how histories of gender and sexuality can help our understanding of individual medical experiences and the complex relations between patients, doctors, policymakers, pharmaceutical companies, and medical ethicists.

Exploring gender and sexuality in the context of post-war medicine can help us to examine potential similarities in medical practices, policies, and experiences across Europe, which moves beyond its Cold War security context and ideological differences to highlight the exchange of scientific ideas across the “Iron Curtain”. By examining gender, sexuality, and medicine in the post-war period we hope this conference can help foster new scholarly perspectives on Europe as a continent that, to an extent, shared common ground through parallel experiences, policies, ideas, and beliefs.

# PROGRAMME – DAY ONE

## FRIDAY 9 JUNE 2023

13:00 – 13:30 Arrival and Registration

13:30 – 13:45 Welcome by **Ulf Schmidt**

(Director of the Centre for the Study of Health, Ethics, and Society, University of Hamburg)

13:45 – 14:00 Introduction by **Kate Docking** and **David Peace**

### **Panel One – Reproductive Policies and Governing Sex (Chaired by Kate Docking)**

14:00 – 14:30 **Judit Sándor** and **Viola Lászlófi** (Central European University, Hungary)

*Women in Front of the Committee: Decision Making on Abortion in Post-War Hungary*

14:30 – 15:00 **Fanni Svégel** (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

*Exploring the 'Abortion Culture': Progressive Policy, Stigma or a Tool for the Medical Establishment?*

15:00 – 15:15 Break

15:15 – 15:45 **Martha Vasili** (University of the Aegean, Greece)

*"Laws out of our bodies". Abortion and contraception as a feminist demand in modern Greece, 1976-1986*

15:45 – 16:15 **Anelia Kassabova** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

*Reproductive Policies of Socialist Bulgaria – National Struggles in International Settings*

16:15 – 16:45 Tea and Coffee Break

### **Keynote Speaker – Sexology and the Cold War**

16:45 – 17:00 Keynote Introduction by **Ulf Schmidt**

17:00 – 18:00 **Agnieszka Kościańska** (University of Warsaw, Poland)

*Gender, Sexuality and Hierarchy*

18:00 – 18:30 Discussion

19:00 – 20:00 Conference Dinner

NEVIO cucina fina

Eppendorfer Landstraße 95

# PROGRAMME – DAY TWO

## SATURDAY 10 JUNE 2023

08:30 – 08:50 Tea and Coffee Arrival

### Panel Two – Transgressing Borders and Shared Ideals (Chaired by Will Studdert)

09:00 – 09:30 **David Peace** (University of Hamburg, Germany)  
*Sex Selection and Civilization: Post-War Genetics and the Spectre of Eugenics in Italy and the UK*

09:30 – 10:00 **Yana Kirey-Sitnikova** (University of Uppsala, Sweden)  
*The Flow of Ideas on Transgender Medicine Across the Iron Curtain*

10:00 – 10:30 **Mila Maeva** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)  
*Medical Migration during the Socialist Period in Bulgaria (Gender Aspects)*

10:30 – 11:00 Tea and Coffee Break

### Panel Three – Gender Dynamics and Health Politics (Chaired by Veronika Stoyanova)

11:00 – 11:30 **Florian Grafl** (Heidelberg University of Education, Germany)  
*Primus non nocere? Gender and Medicine in Early Francoist Spain (1939-1953)*

11:30 – 12:00 **Kristina Popova** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)  
*Banning the Circumcision of Boys, Persecuting Mothers: Political Uses of Medicine During the So-Called Revival Process in Bulgaria 1970s-1980s*

12:00 – 12:30 **Inxhi Brisku** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)  
*Gendering the Care in Socialist Albania*

12:30 – 13:00 **Peter Banks** (University of Hamburg, Germany)  
*Gender Dynamics and the Spatial Propagation of 'Kinderlähmung' in the GDR*

13:00 – 14:00 **Buffet lunch**  
Warburg Haus Foyer

# PROGRAMME – DAY TWO (CONT.)

## **Panel Four – Sexual Deviance and Moral Norms (Chaired by Ulf Schmidt)**

14:00 – 14:30 **Andrea Bělehradová** (University of Hradec Králové, Czechia)  
*Ageing Sexuality in Medical (and Transnational) Expertise during Czechoslovak Socialism*

14:30 – 15:00 **Veronika Lacinová Najmanová** (University of Pardubice, Czechia)  
*Contraception for Better Sex: Discussion of the Importance of Birth Control for Female Sexuality in 1960s Czechoslovakia*

15:00 – 15:30 **Georgi Todorov** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)  
*Sexuality of Mentally Disabled Children in the USSR and the PRB*

15:30 – 16:00 **Kate Docking** (University of Hamburg, Germany)  
*'Is Chastity Outmoded?' Attitudes Towards Sexuality in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s*

16:00 – 16:30 **Thanks and Closing Remarks**

16:30 – 17:30 **Excursion to Exhibition 'Imagining Health II'** (optional)

# ABSTRACTS – PANEL ONE

*Women in Front of the Committee: Decision Making on Abortion in Post-War Hungary*  
Judit Sándor and Viola Lászlófi (Central European University, Hungary)

Policies on abortion changed several times during the cold war period in Hungary, but one element of the regulation remained significant throughout: abortion committees played a crucial role in deciding on women's requests for abortion. The role of these committees involved collecting data on the social and medical status of women, and, during the first two decades of state-socialism, committee members were given a relatively free hand in making their decision. It was only in 1973 that a governmental decree enumerated conditions for accepting an abortion request and it introduced the so-called medico-social criteria. From the perspective of women, who had to appear before these committees in person, the process was a performance in which they obeyed the law by finding a legally acceptable reason to terminate the pregnancy and declare it in their application. If the committee did not allow the termination of the pregnancy, the applicant was informed immediately and, if she found the committee's decision objectionable, she could appeal and submit her request to the second instance committee. In comparison to the average wage at the time, the procedure was quite expensive for women.

In this presentation we will examine how the consideration of medico-social criteria focused more and more on the material conditions of women; and how committee decisions on abortion were not framed as a moral question but as a material one. Lack of housing and lack of income, for example, was considered a legitimate reason for the request, while emotional neglect by the partner was not. This put women in a vulnerable position in front of the committee as they had to lay bare the circumstances of their private lives to demonstrate a crisis situation. The analysis of this procedure in our presentation will be based on data from the medical records of Pesterzsébeti Szülő- és Nőbeteg otthon (Gynecological and Maternity Hospital of Pesterzsébet) and the documents of the abortion committee of Pécs.

*Exploring the 'Abortion Culture': Progressive Policy, Stigma or a Tool for the Medical Establishment?*  
Fanni Svégel (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

The talk aims to trace the reproductive decision- and policy-making processes in post-war Hungary, with particular regard to artificial pregnancy termination. Breaking with the Cold War narrative, I argue that it was mass rape committed by Red Army soldiers which radically reshaped medical practices and government policies concerning abortion. In Hungary, pregnancy termination was established as legal practice in 1945, and after a short period of restriction, the first modern abortion law was enacted in 1956. Correspondingly, like in other Bloc countries, medical abortion was considered a means of birth control, as opposed to its illegal status on the other side of the Iron Curtain. In Western academic works, the term 'abortion culture' was used to describe the policies and medical practices deriving from the deficiency of birth control and the legal status of abortion. By analyzing political, expert and public discourses connected to changes in norms and value orientations concerning abortion, the presentation will explore the central features of the so-called 'abortion culture' in the East (the 1950s –1970s). How did the Hungarian medical establishment frame abortion in professional and popular literature? How was the term 'abortion culture' constructed and politicized in Western academic literature? And how can it be reframed beyond the concepts of progressiveness or stigmatizing efforts?

*“Laws out of our bodies”. Abortion and contraception as a feminist demand in modern Greece, 1976-1986*  
**Martha Vasili** (University of the Aegean, Greece)

The proposed paper examines the claim for free abortion and access to contraceptives in Greece, as expressed by the feminist movement through its theoretical analysis and action during the decade 1976-1986. Several studies in the international bibliography on reproductive rights have shown that birth control was a key demand of the so-called second wave feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s, both in the USA and in several Western European countries, which contributed to the legalization of abortion. Similarly, in Greece, such demands began to emerge shortly after the fall of the Junta in 1974. In 1976 the Movement for the Liberation of Women (Kinisi gia tin Apeleftherosi ton Gynaikon), a feminist group of the period, publicly claimed free abortion and access to contraception for the first time. A decade later, in 1986, the passing of Law 1609/1986 established that abortion in Greece was allowed without conditions up to the 12th week of pregnancy. During this decade, Greek feminists, influenced by an international movement, voiced the demand for free abortion and contraception as a women's right and as part of the broader demand for self-determination of the body and the liberation of women's sexuality. Thus, the proposed paper integrates the history of the Greek paradigm into the international history of reproductive rights by examining the narratives and actions of a multiform feminist movement of the period about the demand for free abortion, as expressed by small autonomous feminist aggregations or larger women's organizations from 1976 to 1986.

*Reproductive Policies of Socialist Bulgaria – National Struggles in International Settings*  
**Anelia Kassabova** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

Following Soviet legislation, abortion on request was legalised in socialist Bulgaria in 1956, but a decade later, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, new forms of regulatory control were introduced: The Bulgarian Ministry of Health and Social Affairs issued instructions restricting the right to abortion on demand.

How did these changes in reproductive policy come about? What debates and struggles within and between the various state subjects involved in the decision-making process (Central Committee and Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Bulgarian Women's Committee, State Council, Medical Academy, etc.) about family models, gender relations and sexuality accompanied them? What was the role of scientific research and what was the position of gynaecologists who had been actively involved in a broad international exchange of experts since the 1960s? How were the changes in the normative basis perceived by the general population, and what strategies were used to respond to them? How were the restrictions implemented in practice at the local level? How did they affect the relationships between medical staff and (female) patients?

The process developed in the context of political rivalry between the 'blocs' on world population issues. In parallel, the feminist's movements and the significant events of the UN "Decade for Women (1976-1985)" played a significant role in shaping national policy.

These questions are analysed through examples of key figures in Bulgarian socialist political life and health care who maintained close contacts within the Soviet bloc and cooperated with international organisations as well as with various institutions from Western Europe and the "Third World".

# KEYNOTE

**Agnieszka Kościąńska**  
**University of Warsaw**

## **GENDER, SEXUALITY AND HIERARCHY**

This lecture recounts the story of the most popular sex book ever published in Poland, *The Art of Love* by Michalina Wiśłocka (1978). As *The Art of Love* is seen as an integral part of the Polish sex revolution with over 7 million copies sold, Wiśłocka's approaches to sexuality and gender merit analysis. While the gynaecologist declared that sexual pleasure was a woman's right, she also suggested that maintaining a gender hierarchy was the most effective means of achieving such pleasure. This lecture situates Wiśłocka's work in both the local and global shifts occurring in sexuality and gender during the 1970s, and argues that the tensions between sexual liberation and gender hierarchy were not unique to Poland but flourishing on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

# ABSTRACTS – PANEL TWO

*Sex Selection and Civilization: Post-War Genetics and the Spectre of Eugenics in Italy and the UK*  
**David Peace** (University of Hamburg, Germany)

In 1930, the statistician and eugenicist Ronald Fisher published *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*. The book was a major contribution to the field of population genetics and suggested the importance of both spontaneous mutations and sex selection as drivers of evolution. Yet, the book also proposed the eugenic idea of 'social selection' as a contributor to human evolution – arguing not only biological sex, but the social conditions determining sex relations (e.g., income, class, and marriage) drove variations between different groups of people. Fisher tied this idea to the collapse of civilizations. This paper looks at the post-war reception of Fisher's ideas of sex selection and social selection in the work of his friends and collaborators, particularly Walter Bodmer and Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza. It looks at their post-war career development and the collaborations between the two, and how Fisher's work came to influence research conducted in both Italy and the UK during a period that has usually been divided between the binary of pre-war eugenics and post-war genetics in the history of the science of human evolutionary biology.

*The Flow of Ideas on Transgender Medicine Across the Iron Curtain*  
**Yana Kirey-Sitnikova** (University of Uppsala, Sweden)

Medical care for transsexual (trans) patients has been provided in the Soviet Union since the end of the 1960s. Those same doctors who provided care conducted research mainly concerned with the formation of gender identities incongruent with the anatomical sex. The first articles were published by psychiatrists Aron Belkin and sexopathologist Pavel Posvyanski in 1972, later they were followed by the works of Aleksandr Bukhanovskii. When reading these works, one gets fascinated by the fact that the authors cited recent works of Western researchers, including John Money, Robert Stoller, and Harry Benjamin, attesting to the unrestricted flow of ideas across the Iron Curtain. Noteworthy, the flow was unidirectional, and the works of Soviet specialists in trans medicine remain unknown in the West to the present day. The first clinical practice guidelines on transsexualism appeared in 1991, several months before the dissolution of the USSR. The guidelines used the Standards of Care developed by the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA) as their basis supplemented by professional experience of Soviet doctors. Taken together, these facts demonstrate the high degree of similarity in provision of medical care to trans patients on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

*Medical Migration during the Socialist Period in Bulgaria (Gender Aspects)*  
**Mila Maeva** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

The research is focused on the movement and migration of medical personnel from Bulgaria and the accumulated experience abroad during the period of socialism. The focus is on providing the opportunity to work outside the borders of the country and the gender specificity and division imposed by the Bulgarian state policy on those working outside the homeland. The research is based on archival and ethnographic field materials tracing the policy of sending skilled labour migrants to the USSR and the countries of the Arab world in the 1960s and 1980s, the possibilities and motives for departure and the results of work abroad. The study also aims to analyze the problems of medical personnel working outside Bulgaria, based on gender and especially violence against women in foreign countries. Displacement traces the different perceptions of the experience gained abroad, which affects the further development and professional growth after returning to the homeland. The transformations that have occurred as a result of working abroad on the way of life and increasing its quality among doctors and nurses are also explored.

# ABSTRACTS – PANEL THREE

*Primus non nocere? Gender and Medicine in Early Francoist Spain (1939-1953)*

**Florian Grafl** (Heidelberg University of Education, Germany)

Numerous historical case studies have investigated measures to combat sexual diseases in the German Democratic Republic and other socialist regimes in eastern Europe in a microhistorical perspective. A common practice of these actions featured women presumably suffering from a sexual disease by isolating them at closed venereological wards. In these institutions, radical disciplinary actions were executed by medically not indicated, questionable treatments and ideological drill. By taking these extreme measures, the aim of the involved political ideologies was to decrease suspected danger in a socialist society. These treatments constituted a form of gendered violence to suppress and to isolate women whose way of life was not in accordance with the regime's ideology.

This paper investigates similar institutions to combat sexual diseases in Spain at the beginning of Franco's dictatorship. It aims to explore in which way medicine was politicised to sanction deviant female behaviour in fascist Spain. In doing so, on the one hand, parallels to closed venereological wards in the GDR will be drawn. On the other hand, the impact of socio-political specifics as for example the huge influence of the Catholic church in Spain will be highlighted. In doing so, the paper explores the history of gendered violence in fascist Spain from a medico-historical aspect. Furthermore, it contributes to the transnational history of venereal diseases and medicine in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The research is based on official documents from the Spanish Ministries of Health and medical institutions as well as on non-official sources as newspaper articles.

*Banning the Circumcision of Boys, Persecuting Mothers: Political Uses of Medicine During the So-Called Revival Process in Bulgaria 1970s-1980s*

**Kristina Popova** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

The paper focuses on the political persecution of the circumcision of Muslim boys during the so-called Revival process in Bulgaria in the 1970s-1980s, when Muslim names and religious manifestations of Muslims in the country (Pomacs and Turks) were prohibited. To control these prohibitions, the authorities used various means of the supervision of Muslim families - home visits, medical examinations in kindergartens and schools. Thus, educators and medical personnel - doctors and nurses - were involved in this supervision. Disclosure of cases of clandestine circumcision of boys in many cases led to trial and conviction in most cases of the mothers. Women's recollections of such cases and of women convicted and imprisoned for "causing bodily harm to the child" from the region of West Rhodopes were used. The purpose of the research is to present the political use of medical and hygiene argumentation and the persecution and violence against women in this process.

*Gendering the Care in Socialist Albania*  
**Inxhi Brisku** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

During the state socialist period in Albania, the state and Party apparatuses undertook several campaigns and sustained policies, which aimed to radically change the economic and social structure of the country. Part of these campaigns was the “struggle for women’s emancipation,” which was considered a crucial element in the transformation of the country.

Despite the changes that the regime took regarding education, work, and the presence of women in the social and political life of the country, it never doubted the role of women as the main care providers in Albanian families, including housework and care for their husbands, children, and in-laws. In the public speeches of the main leaders of the party, government, or of mass organizations regarding the role of women in the family and society, their primary role as care providers was always emphasized, especially regarding the care of children and the elderly. At most, the husband was advised to help the wife in providing care, but he was not thought of as care provider on an equal footing as his wife. This discourse was reinforced even more in the periodicals that targeted women.

Thus, this paper will aim to analyse how the regime gendered the care in the family, as the main responsibility of the women, without questioning this practice even in the most emancipatory initiatives of the regime. The paper will be based on the leaders’ speeches on the “women’s question”, as well as on the articles written on this topic in the main magazine targeting female audiences, *Shqiptarja e Re* (The New Albanian Woman), an organ of the Union of Women of Albania, propagating the Party’s policies towards women.

*Gender Dynamics and the Spatial Propagation of ‘Kinderlähmung’ in the GDR*  
**Peter Banks** (University of Hamburg, Germany)

In Germany, the disease poliomyelitis is often referred to with the term, ‘*kinderlähmung*’, directly translating as ‘infantile-paralysis’. First coined in by German Doctor, Jakob Heine, in 1860, the term originates from the dated belief that poliomyelitis only effects children and causes spinal paralysis. Nevertheless, the continued use of the term illustrates the close association the disease has with children, as they are most commonly affected, and the very rare, but distinguishable feared form of the disease which leads to spinal paralysis. Therefore, particularly in Germany, poliomyelitis is a subject that is rooted in the domestic care of the child. Subsequently, by acknowledging this, the examination of the social dynamics of poliomyelitis can provide a unique insight into discourses such as gender.

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), until the Soviet Sabin-Chumakov vaccine was introduced in the late 1950s and initiated consistent vaccination campaigns, poliomyelitis was a significant cause of concern and was consequently subject to health education outlining alternative preventive measures. To this end, the Deutsches Hygiene Museum in Dresden produced multiple forms of media, including an exhibition 1957. Moreover, centralised within the state’s Ministry of Health, the Hygiene Museum’s educational material was geared towards propagating socialist society. Thus, focusing on the space of the exhibition, this paper will examine how the Hygiene Museum spatially propagated gender dynamics through its illustration of poliomyelitis preventive measures. Such research will ultimately contribute to GDR gender historiography such as Jenny Linik, further highlighting that although the GDR’s 1949 constitution encouraged gender equality, traditional gender roles continued to be propagated through health.

# ABSTRACTS – PANEL FOUR

*Ageing Sexuality in Medical (and Transnational) Expertise during Czechoslovak Socialism*  
Andrea Bělehradová (University of Hradec Králové, Czechia)

Medical experts' ideas about the ageing sexuality of women and men developed differently (depending on gender) in socialist Czechoslovakia. In the late 1950s, gynaecologists were concerned with the working productivity of climacteric women and gradually opened up the topic of their sexual needs. Sexologists began to debate ageing male sexuality in the context of a cardiac rehabilitative program almost 20 years later. Based on Gil Eyal's [2013] sociology of expertise and Ian Hacking's [1995] theory of making up people, the paper analyses shifts in Czechoslovak and transnational expert networks that brought changes in knowledge about ageing sexuality and created new kinds of ageing sexual beings.

I claim that while gynaecologists debated ageing women's sexuality during the 1960s, the work of the US authors – Masters and Johnson – further led to the acknowledgement of the importance of older women's sexual satisfaction. When sexologists discussed the topic of ageing male sexuality, erectile impotence was at the centre of expert attention. Again, it was Masters and Johnson's expertise that informed the Czechoslovak treatment practices targeting ageing male sexual problems. I assert that Czechoslovak experts drew knowledge from Western texts and – just like Western experts – encouraged people to remain sexually active in old age (especially during the 1980s). However, the Czechoslovak experts differed in explaining the causes of impotence to lay people, and the ways of its treatment were distinct (compared to the West) – due to the limited availability of treatment options in the country where the free market was not allowed.

*Contraception for Better Sex: Discussion of the Importance of Birth Control for Female Sexuality in 1960s Czechoslovakia*

Veronika Lacinová Najmanová (University of Pardubice, Czechia)

The aim of the paper is to explore the way in which the importance of contraception for women's sexuality in Czechoslovakia was thematized in 1960s and what connection between the topics of birth control and female sexuality can say about society's approach to women and their (reproductive) rights.

Both in the interwar period and after 1945, the contraceptive advocates (not only) in Czechoslovakia, female activists or doctors and other experts, focused primarily on the health aspects of contraception, or on its eugenic or social significance. In the 1930's birth control movement developed in the Czechoslovakia, but did not address the question of sexuality at all, although it was primarily sexologists and women's activists who were most inclined to promote contraception. The positive influence of contraception on a woman's healthy sexuality came to the fore in Czechoslovakia only in the 1960's in connection with the boom in sexological research, which some authors associate with the specific socialist form of sexual revolution.

In the paper, I analyse if this shift could be related to general changes in the approach to sexuality, or if the reason of this shift can be the different approach of democratic interwar Czechoslovakia and postwar socialist Czechoslovakia to women and different idea about the ideal form of gender relations, which could be assumed by analogy also between the countries of the Western and Eastern blocs.

*Sexuality of Mentally Disabled Children in the USSR and the PRB*  
**Georgi Todorov** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

The proposed paper will examine the perceptions and theoretical concepts of children with mental disabilities after the WWII in the USSR and the PRB. The issue of sexuality of children with various mental problems was analyzed in Soviet defectology also with use of medical screening. Some reasons are related to the negative concept of "deficits" or in its extreme form – "perversion", others – through eugenics and biopolitics.

Scientific understanding of the specifics of the deviance would allow the institutions to prevent the "(un)normal" sexual instincts by and against children with deficits. This will be reviewed by the childcare homes for mentally retarded in the PRB. There the topic of sexuality of such children is neglected and "covered". For this reason, there are extremely few traces in the extant archives which could serve as research fundament.

Despite the fact that sexuality was a researched topic in Soviet defectology and barely known in Bulgarian defectology, both avoid it. If sensuality exists, it is perceived as an overall deviation. Its causes and characteristics were not analyzed. The children – boys or girls – are genderless. Thus, the examination of the theory and practice would allow the revelation of an important element of the attitude and life of mentally handicapped children in those socialist countries. The possible extract of a comparative analysis would be only a positive feature giving better understanding of the differences inside the "monolith" East Block.

*Is Chastity Outmoded? Attitudes Towards Sexuality in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s*  
**Kate Docking** (University of Hamburg, Germany)

On 2 March 1959, the psychiatrist, social reformer and writer Eustace Chesser published an article entitled 'Is Chastity Outmoded? Outdated? Out?' for a special issue of *Family Doctor*, a magazine issued by the British Medical Association (BMA). Chesser not only deemed pre-marital sex acceptable, but also wrote that it could be 'more than ordinarily pleasant'. Chesser's remarks generated a barrage of criticism from doctors, which led to the repeal of his work by the BMA only a few weeks later. This paper analyses the controversies surrounding Chesser's article to examine attitudes towards sex amongst doctors in Britain during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Utilising the letters penned by doctors to the BMA, the paper argues that while the majority opposed Chesser's work and deployed moralising language to do so, not all were steadfastly opposed to pre-marital sex. For some – including Christian doctors – the subject was a thorny and complex issue; one that they struggled to form an opinion on. Yet doctors who advocated for pre-marital sex remained ambivalent about the notion of sex for pleasure, instead stressing the role of sex in facilitating communication and love in relationships, like other sexologists and medical professionals across the 'Nylon Curtain' at this particular time. The case study of 'Is Chastity Outmoded?', together with the reactions amongst doctors to the publication of *Penthouse*, a porn magazine published from 1965, demonstrate that – as Dagmar Herzog has argued – sexual pleasure remained taboo even as the sexual 'revolution' took hold across Europe. Rather, medical and sexological discourses of individual responsibility prevailed.

# NOTES

# NOTES



# **BEYOND BINARIES**

## **GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND MEDICINE IN POSTWAR EUROPE**

**1945-1990**

**WARBURG HAUS  
HAMBURG**

**9 JUNE - 10 JUNE 2023**

**A 'TAMING THE EUROPEAN  
LEVIATHAN' CONFERENCE**

